

John A. Thomas  
32 Custer Ave.  
Newark, N.J.

Mr. President, Members of the Municipal Council of the City of Newark, Honored Guests and Friends:

I can state at the outset that although I appear before you full of emotion it is certainly not of the same type or calibre as my last presentation before this august body. I don't know whether you were fully aware of the fact that my last appearance was literally one of desperation. I had realized that a potential dream of years might become a living reality. I also was cognizant of the fact that there was a small core of dedicated people of African descent who felt the desire for "pride in Newark" for their fellow Black Americans. As was obvious at the last meeting of the Council, <sup>I ATTENDED</sup> our major problem had become a fiduciary one. As history will relate, we came to our legislative representatives as other groups had in the past who were attempting their first major parade celebration for a worthy cause. The results of our appeal to you and the parade that we initiated are now historic and the major reason I am here tonight is to humbly thank a group of concerned representatives of all the people of the City of Newark.

As far as the result of the parade effort is concerned, the press releases and the community reaction speak for themselves. Our committee is extremely proud of the orderliness and timeliness of the first parade honoring an American hero of African descent. When you realize that this parade was organized, arranged, assembled and

executed within a six week period you realize what can be done by Negroes in Newark when they are saturated with pure dedication and the energy to work night and day for a cause. The Crispus Attucks Day Parade on Sunday, March 6, 1966 proved several basic concepts, Namely, that it could be done, that it should be done and that no one can deny that it should not be done again next year.

In reflection, we the Sons and Daughters of Crispus Attucks know that we made history on March 6th but we are well aware of the fact that this historical parade which has gotten national plaudits could not have occurred without the body I am appearing before this evening. You, the members of the Council, along with a man who has served the City for many years as City Clerk, Mr. Harry Reichenstein should be commended for your part in the creation of a truly historical event which now belongs to posterity.

Unfortunately, the only negative criticism which sincerely hurt our committee and thousands of Negroes in Newark came from an article in the ~~Record~~ "Newark News" dated Saturday, March 12, 1966 entitled "All About Essex". Since there was no byline to this editorial, I think that the unknown writer should be made aware of certain facts which were excluded from his article. Initially, the opening of a Pandora's Box for parade appropriations that was mentioned is quite misleading to the public. For example, let us take the case of the parade that followed ours, the St. Patrick's Day Parade. After 32 years of Parade activity the fine Americans who conducted ~~last~~ <sup>that</sup> Sunday's parade have devised a financial system of parade participation which

renders them financially independent, and therefore, there has been no recent necessity to appeal to the Council to assist in their parade operations. But, ours was a first, not 3rd, effort and historically the Council has seen fit to aid community groups in the early parade endeavors.

Secondly, the author of the article failed to realize the psychological and sociological implications involved in a meager appropriation of \$2000.00. Perhaps he failed to attend the parade and see these thousands of participants and spectators hold their heads high with pride. In fact, had he looked closely he would have seen many tears of joy. This parade truly represented the theme of Newark's 300th Anniversary "PRIDE IN NEWARK".

In closing, I would like to re-iterate the humble gratitude of our committee and the Negroes of Newark to you fine gentlemen for your part in making the Crispus Attucks Day Parade an historically successful event. In addition, we wish to apprise you of the fact that we have already started preparing for a mammoth Crispus Attucks Day Parade on Sunday, March 5, 1967. At our meeting last evening at 716 Bergen St. the following officers of the Sons and Daughters of Crispus Attucks were elected: President John A. Thomas, 1st V.P. Lewis Miles; 2nd V.P. Ida Barker, 3rd V.P. and Counsel Irvin Booker; Secretary Constance Woodruff; Recording Secretary Queenie James; Treasurer James E. Moore, Jr.; Gen'l Parade Chairman Roscoe Jennings; Parade Adjutant John H. Brown; Ass't Adjutant William Thomas; Chief of Staff William Stewart; Public Relations and Publicity, Rudolph Kinchen; Chaplain, Rev. James E. Meyers; Sgt.-at-Arms, James A. Thomas. The Trustees for

1965-67 elected were Richard Fox, Chairman; Danny Williams, Annette Wheeler, Harold Taylor, Robert E. Smith and Bennie Lee.

Thank you again for the opportunity for making this presentation and our committee will keep you informed of its activities as we progress toward March 5, 1967 which we know will also add to the "Pride in Newark".

John A. Thomas